

A long time ago in a galaxy far,
far away....



May the Play be with You!

The Force of Executive Functioning in Young Learners with
Developmental Delays/Disabilities

April, 2016

Patty Matthews, Ed.S., Jaymie Jacobs, M.Ed. .& Sue Olson-
Shinn, Ed. D.



Bell work

Part 1: Make a Puppet

1. Chose your character.
2. Decorate your character.
3. Glue on craft stick.

Part 2: Role-play

1. With a partner, chose one “play behavior” from the slips of paper on your table.
2. Role-play the “play behavior” with your partner, using your puppets.
3. Solve the conflict.

Research on Social Competence

Hart and Risley Study

Perry Preschool

5 Things to Know About Play

(From The National Association for the Education of Young Children)

1

Children learn through play. Children learn and develop cognitive skills, physical abilities, new vocabulary, social skills and literacy skills.

2

Play is healthy. Play helps children grow and counteracts obesity issues facing many children today.

3

Play reduces stress. Play is joyful and provides an outlet for anxiety and stress.

4

Play is more than meets the eye. Play is simple and complex. There are many types of play: symbolic, sociodramatic, functional, and games with rules—to name just a few.

5

Play and learning go hand-in hand. They are not separate activities. They are intertwined. Think about them as a science lecture with a lab. Play is the child's lab.

Social Skills through Play

- Cooperation
- Negotiation
- Collaboration
- Socialization
- Rules formation
- Conflict resolution

Emotional Skills through Play

- Empathy
- Impulse control
- Self regulation
- Persistence
- Resilience
- Self-confidence
- Joy

Why are Play and Social Skills Important?

- Develops social skills.
- Enables an individual to maintain friendships.
- Promotes negotiating, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Teaches empathy.

Play is necessary for fun and relaxation!

The Importance of Play

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BPz_QAqS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BPz_QAqSAU)
[AU](#)

Examples of Social/Emotional Skill Deficits



When a Child has Social/Emotional Deficits you May Notice:

- Poor attention and concentration.
- Flits from one activity to the next without actually playing.
- Upends toys on the floor.
- Difficulty taking turns/sharing.
- Gets upset when 'loses' a game.
- Lacks awareness of others feelings and fails to read others based on their own verbal and non-verbal cues.






- Difficulty expressing/regulating emotions.
- Difficulty initiating and maintaining friendships.
- Always requires an adult to play.
- Repetitive or narrow interests in toys/play.
- Prefers to play alone.
- Interrupts frequently.
- Poor topic maintenance.
- Speaks 'at you' versus engaging in a two way conversation.
- Doesn't understand consequences of their actions.

The Link Between Executive Functioning and Play for Young Learners who Have Developmental Delays



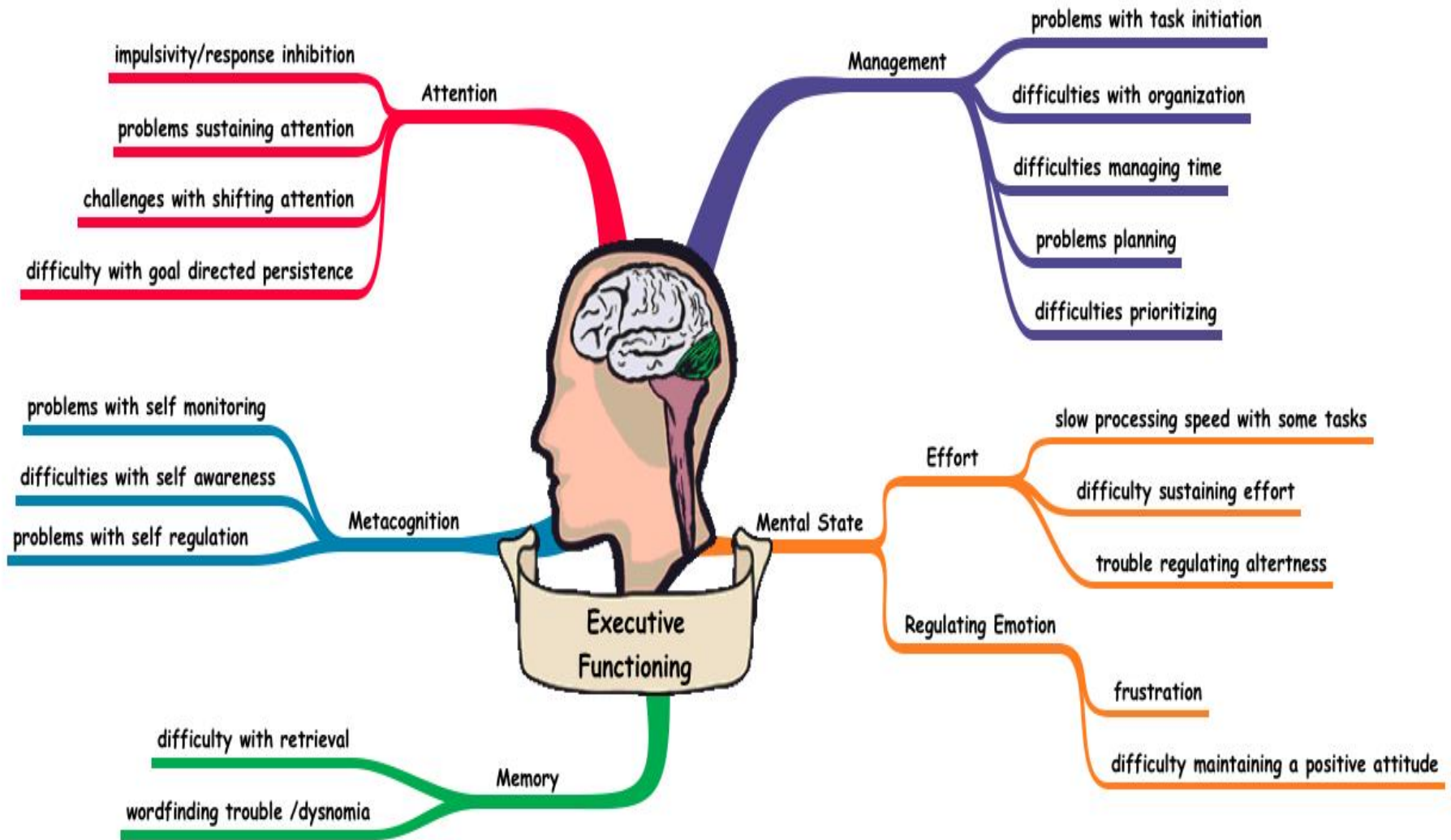
Executive Functioning

Executive Function

	Inhibit Behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ability to stop what you are doing in order to allow the other EF functions to begin working
	Visual imagery (non-verbal working memory) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Imagine steps and remember them• Foresight and Hindsight skills• The concept of time
	Talk to yourself (verbal working memory) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self guidance (voice in your head)• Give instructions• Ask questions
	Emotional Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inhibit strong emotion• Moderate emotion• Provides motivation
	Problem Solving <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to perform mental play, manipulate images• Ability to see novel combinations to issues towards a goal

Persistent self control capacities + problem solving = Goal

Brain Behavior Relationships



Play: Brain-Behavior Relationships

- Memory
- Self –Regulation
- Distancing and decontextualizing
- Oral language
- Symbolic generalization
- Successful Adjustment
- Better Social Skills

Vygotskian Approach to Play

- Motivation
- Cognitive decentering
- Advances development of mental representations
- Fosters development of deliberate behaviors

Evidence for Play/Brain Connection

- <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/08/06/336361277/scientists-say-childs-play-helps-build-a-better-brain>

The Complexity of New Learning

1. Must receive accurate sensory information (visual, auditory, and/or kinesthetic input) then must be able to attend and concentrate on sensory input.
2. Hold and process the information is active working memory by linking new information to visual, auditory and/kinesthetic memories.

Encode new information:

- i. Hold it in memory for a short period of time
- ii. Chunk it, then integrate into long term memory
- iii. Retrieve the information when necessary that is timely and accurate

3. Utilize the information to organize thoughts that translate into behaviors.

Young Learners with Delayed Development/Disabilities

- Have difficulty processing sensory information accurately.
- Different parts of the brain no longer can communicate with each other.
- Processing speed may be slower.
- ***As a result***....their communication and behavior can be different.



Young Learners with Delayed Development/Disabilities

- Don't experience play and cognitive milestones in a typical manner or anticipate social interactions.
- Presenting behaviors may mask effects of trauma, or brain development may be altered/interrupted/halted resulting in underdevelopment of brain.
- New learning requires more intensive and specific practice.
- Impact of deficit may become more significant as child matures.



So Now What?...
Play Plans

Importance of Play Plans

- Provides the script for young learners struggling with these executive functioning tasks.
- Increases practice and strengthens synaptic connections to minimize impact of altered/interrupted or halted brain development.
- Teach social skills directly through priming and visual modeling.

**With a friend, discuss how
you teach play?**



What is a Play Plan?

“Executive function” helps a child develop the prefrontal cortex. It helps a child plan, predict, control impulses, persist through trouble, and organize thoughts to complete a goal. Children learn how to avoid distraction, and become self-organized and self-directed.

Adapted from Dr. Shen Li-Lee

A Shared Plan

- A play plan is developed between an adult and young learner.
- The idea of the *play plan* is to get a child to think ahead of time and make a plan about it.
- The action of drawing/writing it down, reinforces in a child's mind the decision to do a particular activity.

The play plan is to help the young learner stay focused!

Rules to Play Plans



How to Develop a Play Plan

1. Who?
2. What skills do you want to teach?
3. What is the most effective way to communicate?
4. When do you develop a plan?

Observational Checklist for Play

Heidemann and Hewitt (1987)

1. Pretending with Objects
2. Role-Playing
3. Verbalizations about Play Scenario
4. Verbal Communication during a play Episode
5. Persistence in Play
6. Interactions
7. Entrance to a play group
8. Conflict Management
9. Turn-Taking
10. Support of Peers

What is the most effective why to communicate?

- Can be drawn out.
- Can be written out.
- Can be verbal.
- Can be photo/video model.

My Plan Book



I want to play blocks.



I want to play dress-up.

By: Technologyinearlychildhood.com



By: Toolsofthemind.org

Personal Play Plan

Developed by Dr. Susan Shinn

First

Next

Last

Develop a Play Plan

- Using the “Personal Play Plan”, Identify a young learner who could benefit “play plan”.
- Using the “play plan” script out a plan for a child.

Additional Ways to Teach Play

- Expert players
- Play Scripts
- Flannel Board Story
- Social Stories
- Puppetry

Conclusion

